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AUTHOR O'Neal, Sandra
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ABSTRACT

Student performances on the American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) were compared in large school districts. Focus was on determining whether college-bound graduates in different school districts score equally well on college entrance examinations and how college entrance examination scores for students compare across school districts. A survey instrument was mailed to directors of research in the 100 largest school districts in the United States, with 56% responding, representing 27 states. ACT results are displayed in 5 charts (one each for the English, mathematics, social studies, and natural science subtests and the composite), and SAT results are displayed in 2 charts (one each for the verbal and mathematics subtests). Scores for a district may be compared to scores for other districts in the same size range group or any other size groups. An appendix alphabetically lists the 56 participating school districts by name, location, and size of student population (ranging from 17,500 to 590,000). (SLD)

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Carol Robinson
Director

prepared by:

Sandra O'Neal
Assistant Director for Testing and Evaluation

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INTRODUCTION

Education has been buffeted by multiple reform movements at both the federal and state levels during the eighties. Accountability is the watchword of almost any of the reform movements which can be mentioned. This narrowly focused study attempts to present information that may be a partial answer to two of the questions being posed by parents, business leaders, school board members, and legislators, which are:

- Do our graduates who are college-bound score as well on college entrance examinations as similarly prepared students in other school districts?
- How do college entrance examination scores for students in school districts that may be comparable to ours compare to those for students in our district?

In light of these questions, data from the American College Test (ACT) and the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) has been utilized for this report.

SUMMARY

Comparability

The issue of comparability is confounded by a number of uncontrolled variables such as geographic location, both state and local curricula expectations, socio-economic status of families within each school district, gender balance, ethnic distribution, and the voluntary self-selection of test-takers for both test instruments to list only a few. For this study only size of district has been selected as a method of comparing the students' performance on the ACT and SAT. Test results according to district size have been compiled by ranges.

Participants

A survey instrument was mailed to the directors of research in the 100 largest school districts in the United States with 56% responding. Participating school districts range in size of student population from 590,000 to 17,500 and represent 27 states. The appendix contains a alphabetical listing of participating school districts with the student population each reported for the 1986-87 school year.

ACT Results

ACT results are displayed on five charts; one each for the English, Math, Social Studies, and Natural Sciences subtests and the Composite. Each chart shows a range of scaled scores with the National Average for that subtest, and the distribution of scores arranged in descending order for three groups of participants. The ranges for the size of school districts are as follows: Group A - fewer than 65,000; Group B - 65,000 to 100,000; and Group C - more than 100,000. The names of the school districts which comprise the three comparison groups are found on page six.

SAT Results

SAT results are displayed on two charts, one each for Verbal and Math subtests. Each chart shows a range of scaled scores with the National Average for that subtest and the distribution of scores arranged in descending order for four groups of participants. The size of district ranges for groups of school districts are as follows: Group A - fewer than 39,999; Group B - 40,000 to 62,999; Group C - 63,000 to 100,000; and Group D - more than 100,000. The names of the school districts which comprise the four comparison groups are found on page nine.

How to Use Reported Data

In order to preserve the confidentiality of results for participating school districts, district names are not linked to reported scores. Participants are able to compare scores for their district to scores for the other districts in their size range group and any other group on the chart. In considering the displayed results, it is important to recognize that districts which are in states where one test is the predominant instrument selected by students can be assumed to have larger numbers taking that test in greater numbers than the other. Generally, in locations in which there are fewer test takers, scores tend to be higher than in districts that have a higher proportion of students taking the same test.

AMERICAN COLLEGE TEST (ACT)

1986

ENGLISH

Score Range	Group A	Group B	Group C
	19.9		
	19.6		
		19.3	
		19.2	
		19.1	
19			
	18.9*	18.9	
	18.8	18.8	
	18.7		18.7*
Natl. Avg. ⇨ 18.5		18.6	
	18.1		
18	18.0	18.0	
		17.9	
		17.4	17.4
17		17.0	
	16.2		
16			
	15.6		
		15.4	
	15.3		
	15.1		
15			
14			
			13.3
	13.6		
13			13.0

*More than one school district achieved this score.

ACT
1986

MATH

Score Range	Group A	Group B	Group C
22			
		21.5	
21			
		19.8	
	19.4		
	19.1		
19		19.0*	
			18.8
			18.7
	18.4		
18			
		17.9	
	17.6*	17.6	
Natl. Avg. ⇨ 17.3			
	17.1		
17	17.0		
		16.9	
	16.5		
	16.2		
16			
		15.7*	15.7
	15.5		
15		15.0	
		14.7	
14			
	13.8		
	13.6		
13			
12			
	11.2		11.4
			11.2

*More than one school district achieved this score.

ACT
1986

SOCIAL STUDIES

Score Range	Group A	Group B	Group C
20			
	19.8		
		19.1	
19		19.0	
	18.9		
		18.5	
		18.4	
	18.3		
	18.1	18.1	
18			18.0
	17.9		
Natl. Avg. ⇨ 17.6	17.7		17.6
		17.5	
	17.4		
	17.2		
17		17.0	
		16.6*	
	16.5		
		16.3	
16			
	15.8		
			15.3
15			
	14.3		
14	13.8	14.0	
13			
			12.4
12			
	11.3		11.5
11			

ACT
1986

*More than one school district achieved this score.

NATURAL SCIENCES

Score Range	Group A	Group B	Group C
		23.5	
		23.2	
23	22.9		
	22.6		
		22.2*	
22		22.0	
		21.8	21.8
Natl. Avg. 21.4	21.5		
	21.3		21.2
21	20.9		
	20.6		
		20.3	
		20.2	
	20.1		
20		20.0	
		19.5	
19			19.0
	18.6		
		18.3	
	18.2		
18	18.0		
17			
			16.2
16			
15			
			14.7
	14.4		
14			
	10.9		

ACT
1986

*More than one school district achieved this score.

COMPOSITE

Score Range	Group A	Group B	Group C
	20.5	20.4	
	20.2	20.2 20.1	
20			
		19.5 19.4	19.4
	19.3		19.2
	19.1		
19	19.0		
Natl. Avg. ⇨ 18.8			
	18.5		
	18.3*		
18			
		17.9 17.8	
	17.6		
		17.4*	
17			17.0
	16.5		
16			
		15.7	
	15.4 15.3		
15			
14			13.6
13	13.0		
			12.7

ACT
1986

*More than one school district achieved this score.

American College Testing Program (ACT), 1986

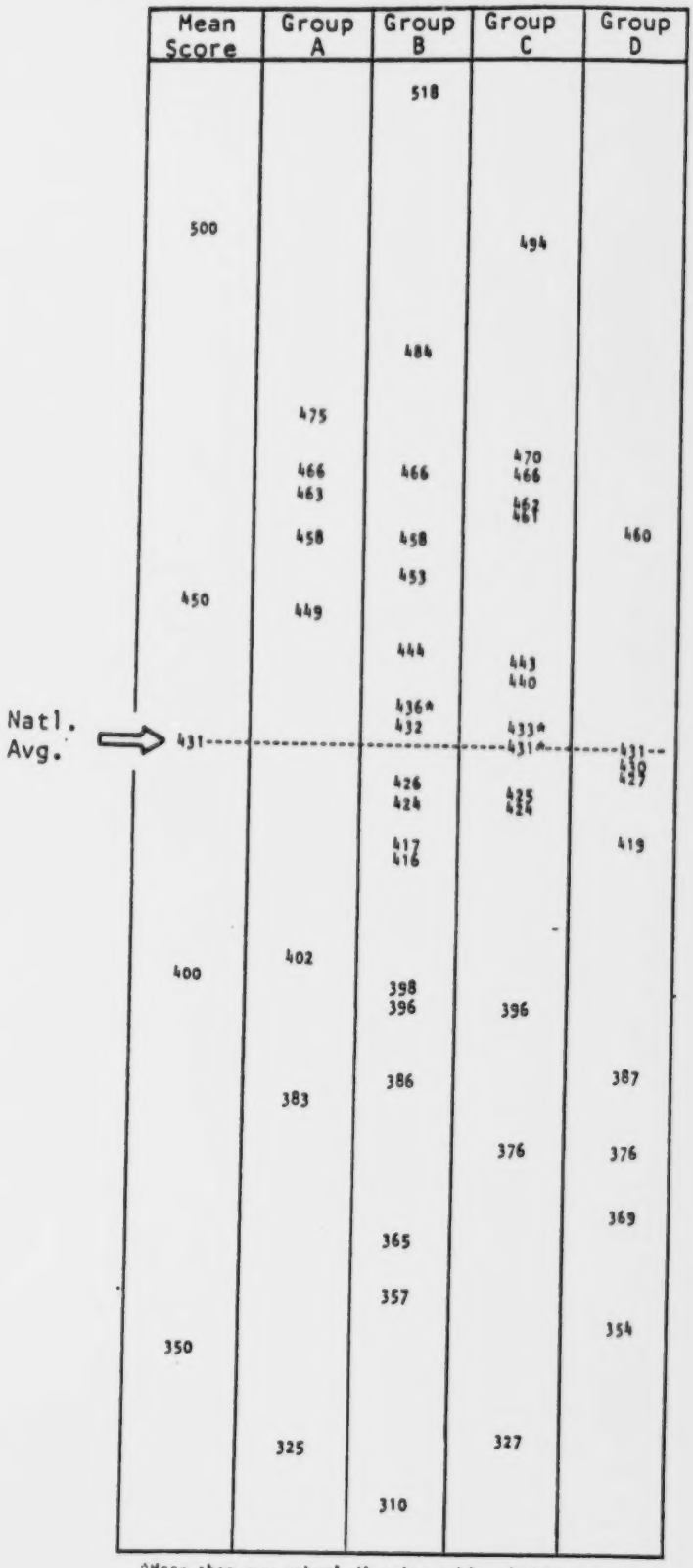
Group A	Group B	Group C
Birmingham (AL)	Albuquerque (NM)	Chicago (IL) *
Cincinnati (OH)	Clearwater (FL) *	Detroit (MI) *
Denver (CO)	Columbus (OH)	Jacksonville (FL)
El Paso (TX) *	Jefferson Co. (CO)	Tampa (FL) *
Mesa (AZ)	Jefferson Co. (KY)	Dallas (TX) *
Minneapolis (MN)	Milwaukee (WI)	
Oklahoma City (OK)	Nashville (TN)	
Pensacola (FL)	Orlando (FL) *	
Phoenix (AZ)	Palm Beach (FL) *	
San Antonio (TX) *	Salt Lake City (UT)	
St. Paul (MN)	San Francisco (CA) *	
Tucson (AZ)		
Wichita (KS)		

* These school districts are located in states which do not use the ACT as the major college entrance examination.

SCHOLASTIC APTITUDE TEST (SAT)

1986

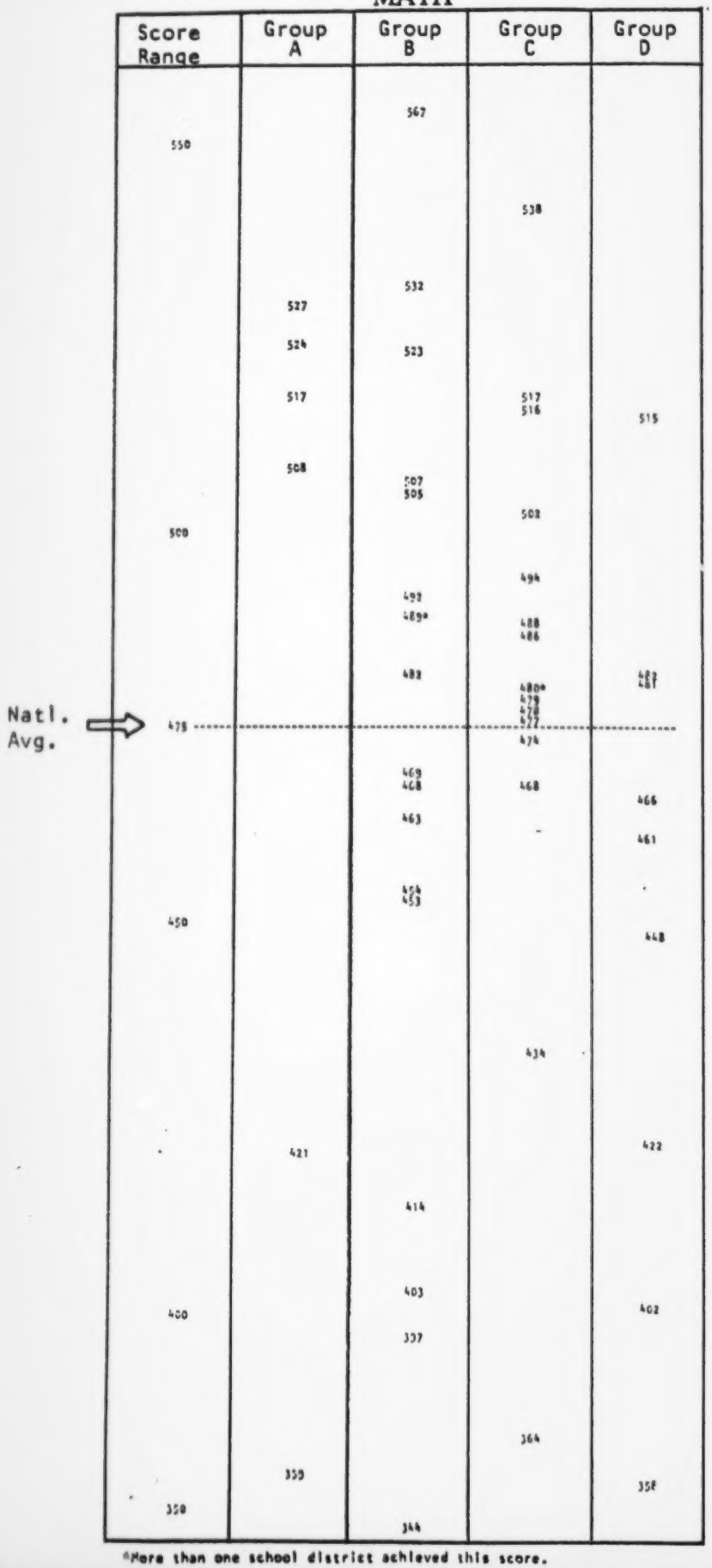
VERBAL



*More than one school district achieved this score.

SAT
1986

MATH



SAT
1986

*More than one school district achieved this score.

Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT), 1986

Group A	Group B	Group C	Group D
Eugene (OR)	Austin (TX)	Albuquerque (NM) *	Chicago (IL) *
Hartford (CT)	Charleston (SC)	Annapolis (MD)	Dallas (TX)
Minneapolis (MN)	Cincinnati (OH) *	Atlanta (GA)	Detroit (MI) *
Norfolk (VA)	El Paso (TX)	Clearwater (FL)	Fall Church (VA)
Phoenix (AZ) *	Fresno (CA)	Columbus (OH) *	Jacksonville (FL)
San Juan (CA)	Greenville (SC)	Ft. Worth (TX)	Los Angeles (CA)
Winston-Salem (SC)	Indianapolis (IN)	Jefferson Co. (CO) *	Philadelphia (PA)
	Long Beach (CA)	Louisville (KY) *	San Diego (CA)
	Marietta (GA)	Milwaukee (WI) *	Tampa (FL)
	Mesa (AZ) *	Nashville (TN) *	
	Newark (NJ)	Orlando (FL)	
	Oklahoma City (OK) *	Rockville (MD)	
	Portland (OR)	San Francisco (CA)	
	Raleigh (NC)	Towson (MD)	
	Sacramento (CA)	Virginia Beach (VA)	
	San Antonio (TX)	West Palm Beach (FL)	
	Tucson (AZ) *		
	Wichita (KS) *		

* These school districts are located in states which do not use the SAT as the major college entrance examination.

APPENDIX

FIGURE 1

ALPHABETICAL LISTING OF PARTICIPATING DISTRICTS

District Name	Location	District Size
Albuquerque Public Schools	Albuquerque, New Mexico	82,000
Anne Arundel County Public Schools	Annapolis, Maryland	63,782
Atlanta Public Schools	Atlanta, Georgia	66,340
Austin Independent School District	Austin, Texas	60,000
Baltimore County Public Schools	Towson, Maryland	80,630
Charleston Public Schools	Charleston, South Carolina	43,000
Chicago Public Schools	Chicago, Illinois	17,418 (high school only)
Cincinnati Public Schools	Cincinnati, Ohio	52,000
Cobb County School System	Marietta, Georgia	58,000
Columbus Public Schools	Columbus, Ohio	68,000
Dallas Independent School District	Dallas, Texas	129,377
Dayton Public Schools	Dayton, Ohio	28,908
Denver Public Schools	Denver, Colorado	60,282
Detroit Public Schools	Detroit, Michigan	185,652
Duval County School Board	Jacksonville, Florida	101,173
El Paso Independent School District	El Paso, Texas	60,788
Eugene Public Schools	Eugene, Oregon	17,500
Fairfax Virginia	Falls Church, Virginia	130,000
Forsyth County School District	Winston-Salem, North Carolina	38,847
Fort Worth Independent School District	Fort Worth, Texas	76,107
Fresno Unifed School District	Fresno, California	59,000
Granite School District	Salt Lake City, Utah	72,000
Greenville County Public Schools	Greenville, South Carolina	51,000
Hartford Public Schools	Hartford, Connecticut	24,289
Hillsborough County Public Schools	Tampa, Florida	114,259
Indianapolis Public Schools	Indianapolis, Indiana	55,049
Jefferson County Public Schools	Lakewood, Colorado	78,000
Jefferson County Public Schools	Louisville, Kentucky	92,430
Jefferson County School System	Birmingham, Alabama	46,152

Long Beach Unified School District	Long Beach, California	64,672
Los Angeles Unified School District	Los Angeles, California	590,000
Mesa Unified School District	Mesa, Arizona	56,393
Metropolitan Public Schools	Nashville, Tennessee	65,076
Milwaukee Public Schools	Milwaukee, Wisconsin	90,000
Minneapolis Public Schools	Minneapolis, Minnesota	39,500
Montgomery County Public Schools	Rockville, Maryland	95,000
Mount Diablo Unified School District	Concord, California	31,433
Newark Public Schools	Newark, New Jersey	52,856
Norfolk Public Schools	Norfolk, Virginia	35,861
Oklahoma City Public Schools	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma	40,000
Orange County Public Schools	Orlando, Florida	90,000
Palm Beach County Public Schools	West Palm Beach, Florida	84,000
Phoenix Union High School District	Phoenix, Arizona	19,806
Pinellas County School Board	Clearwater, Florida	88,476
Portland Public Schools	Portland, Oregon	51,880
Sacramento City Unifed School District	Sacramento, California	45,800
San Antonio Independent School District	San Antonio, Texas	60,000
San Diego Unified School District	San Diego, California	115,000
San Francisco Unified School District	San Francisco, California	65,000
San Juan Unified School District	Carmichael, California	45,000
School District of Philadelphia	Philadelphia, Pennsylvania	196,601
St. Paul Public Schools	St. Paul, Minnesota	32,382
Tucson Unified School District	Tucson, Arizona	54,090
Virginia Beach City Schools	Virginia Beach, Virginia	66,000
Wake County Public Schools	Raleigh, North Carolina	58,212
Wichita Unified School District	Wichita, Kansas	45,671